

Summarized Interview with Camille Brown

**Conducted by Nia King and Solenne Montgomery on March 21, 2021
for the West Springfield High School Applied History Program**

Mrs. Camille Brown, 75, was interviewed by Nia King and Solenne Montgomery on March 21st, 2021.

Camille Washington Brown was born in Washington, D.C because according to Camille hospitals in Virginia were not accommodating to Black patients, often putting up to four women in labor to a room. Camille's mother opted to go to Washington, D.C where there were black hospitals to give birth to her. Camille's mother was a native to Fairfax County while her father was from Caroline County, Virginia. Her family lived in Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia. Camille described Bailey's Crossroads growing up as a sprawling community with mixed-style housing. At first, there was one church named Warner Baptist Church. The minister, Rev. Milton Sheppard, that was there while she was growing up was also the minister at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Lincolnia, VA. Camille recalls two men, Mr. Jones and Mr. Hall, being responsible for building many of the homes in the community. Camille said typically men would work outside of the community, commuting to work, while women worked domestically within the community or near-by communities. Hunting of deer or wild game birds, fishing, and swimming were very popular past-times for the men of the Springdale at the time. Camille recalls several property owners and entrepreneurs in the community. Her grandmother grew flowers and sold them to a florist in Washington, D.C.

Camille's grandfather purchased 10 acres intending to sustain his family of nine children, his wife, and mother. The property consisted of a barn, a pasture, cattle, horses, vegetable patches, a strawberry patch, chicks, guineas, ducks, and turkeys. Her grandfather sold the excess

animal products like eggs, milk, butter, and poultry to the community members, and delivered baked goods for a local bakery and later worked at Cameron Station as a guard. Growing up she and her cousins would sled on the hills and ice skate on her grandfather's creek at the edge of the pasture.

Camille knew of the community's Bailey's Colored School that her mother, aunts, and uncles attended in their youth. The school was for the African American Springdale community and went up to sixth or seventh grade. This school and another school in Lincolnia were run by Lillian Hopkins Carey who was the first teacher and later principal. The two-room school was on the land just across the street from Mrs. Lillian Carey's home. After completing education at the Bailey's Colored School, a few students attended Jennie Dean's Vocational Institute in Manassas or a high school in Washington D.C

Her uncles hitchhiked or carpooled with family friends to go to a vocational-technical school in Manassas for their diplomas. Her mother and aunts hitchhiked or carpooled to attend Washington, D.C to attend and graduate from Cardozo Highschool. Her mother and one aunt attended Howard University. Her mother majored in sociology and her aunt majored in Home Economics; and later taught sewing classes to ladies in the community in the evening. Her uncles attended the military and later obtained jobs in the federal government or local businesses. Her father was a long- distance tractor-trailer driver and later a chauffeur for the federal government. His longest tenure was with Department of Defense the driver for the assistant secretary of defense.

Camille attended James Lee Elementary in 1948 for grades Kindergarten through third. After Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka (1954), Fairfax County completed an elementary school in her community in 1956. Here she attended Lillian Carey Elementary School and

grades 4 through 6. For her first few years of high school (7th – 10th), she attended Luther Jackson High School. It was named after the historian and educator Dr. Luther P. Jackson, whose work was recognized by the NAACP and credited African Americans as a major part of Virginia history. Luther Jackson High School was the first and only high school in Fairfax County that educated black students at the time. However, after the landmark decision from *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and pressure from communities, Fairfax County Public Schools started allowing black students to go to the high school closest to their home by request and pupil placement approval. Thus Camille, her younger brother, and her two cousins transferred to J.E.B Stuart, now named Justice High School. Camille remembered that at the time the school bus wouldn't stop in the Black community to pick up the three Black students, so Camille, her brother, and cousin had to walk across Columbia Pike into the white neighborhood and wait at the bus stop on the corner of Washington Street. She said she experienced period-typical instances of racism at J.E.B Stuart and stood most of the time for the ride on school bus, and eating lunch alone in the school corridor of a far hall. At Stuart, Camille was a majorette, her younger brother played basketball, and her cousin sang in the choir. At Luther Jackson High School, older brothers joined the band, basketball, and football. Camille noted that teachers at Luther Jackson were exceptional and developed many successful students who became employed or owned their own businesses.

After high school, her younger brother enlisted and went overseas to the Vietnam War. Her older brothers and other males from the community used their masonry and tile trades learned at LJHS industrial arts classes and as journeyman. Camille recalls her older brothers building their own homes as well as churches, and buildings in and the surrounding community.

After high school, Camille earned a degree, from Bloomberg State University, PA where they had college degrees in special education, now Bloomsburg University. In college, she made the majorettes squad in Sophomore year after not making it freshman year, and junior year she was captain. She worked at the Department of Education over the summer in her freshman and sophomore year and took classes at Howard to finish her degree on time in four years. Since she majored in special education, she had three job offers -- Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax when she graduated.

She taught at Beechtree Elementary School as a special education teacher two years; Glen Forest Elementary School 10 years as a first, second, and third-grade teacher; and at Newington Forest for three years as a second and third grade teacher. Later she worked two years at Fairfax County Department of Personnel, while also pursuing classes in counseling. At this time, she also had her master's in Supervisory Administration from the University of Colorado.

In 1986, she worked as an elementary school counselor at Silverbrook Elementary School located in the Crosspointe community. The school located in a community with young and highly educated professional parents began with approximately 550 students grew to 1,200 students. There school had 19 temporary classrooms because of the increased size of the student body. During this time the school needed an additional administrator, she also interviewed for the second assistant principal position under Principal Yvonne McCall. Mrs. McCall who was the first Black female principal there and was honored in 104th Congress by the Virginia representative.

After ten years at Silverbrook Elementary School, Camille was assigned to White Oaks Elementary briefly, and then Groveton Elementary as assistant principal. During this time, she

was nominated to the Dwight Eisenhower People-to-People program by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and selected to go to China to meet with Ministers of Education for two weeks to share teaching techniques and student program ideas. She was also worked as an adjunct instructor for UVA and taught Fairfax County's Department of Personnel Human Relations course to FCPS teachers. After retiring with 33 years with FCPS, she worked three years as an Academic Reviewer for the Department of Education in Richmond, Education Advisor for foster families, and as a Colleague Collaborator for FCPS.

When asked about her family, she said she met her husband, Morris, through his sister who knew her mother from NAACP and church. Camille and her husband lived in Springfield where they raised their two sons who attended FCPS and Virginia universities. Her sons attended integrated schools, youth sports, and activities. Racism was subtle or covert. Housing was now "open" in Fairfax County as of 1969. Communities were trying to fulfill the dream of cooperation and accommodation. In terms of the changes in Fairfax County, she said the thing that bothered her most was her grandfather's pasture being sold. The 10-acre parcel had been her sanctuary – a place of serene peace -- sheer pleasure, joy and protection from the institutional racism pre-nine sixty-nine.

When asked to give advice to her children and grandchildren she said, study hard, and be prepared to step out to seize the opportunity that could be yours. Many African Americans and allies of the Black community have fought hard to open doors and create more opportunities."



TOMMY WARRICK
CAMILLE WASHINGTON

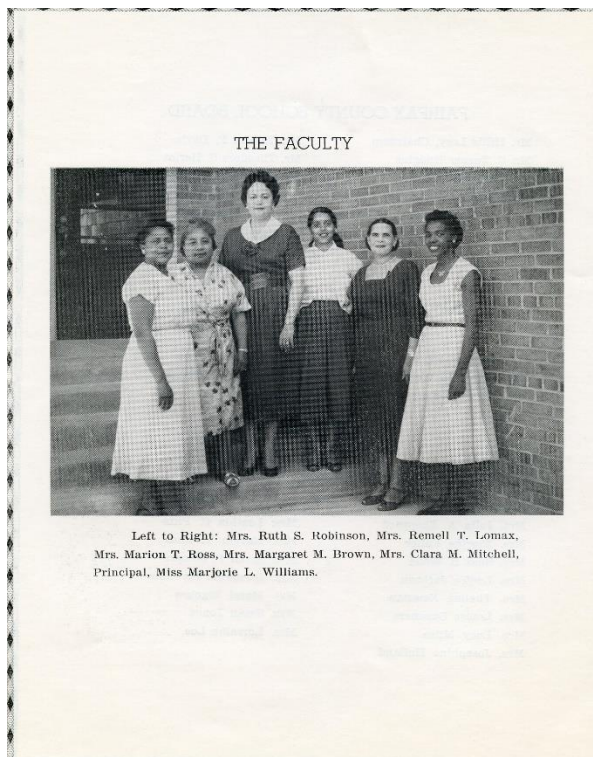
MAJORETTES

Our high-kicking, snappy-strutting majorettes, led by captain Nancy Chambers, enjoyed another successful season. The girls performed intricate maneuvers and formations at half-time of each football game, and demonstrated their prize-winning marching abilities in such competition as the Cherry Blossom Parade, the George Washington Day Parade and the Winchester Apple Festival.



Left: Mrs. Camille Brown, then Ms. Camille Washington, senior yearbook photo from J.E.B Stuart Highschool 1965

Right: Mrs. Camille Brown, then Ms. Camille Washington, pictured in the top row third from the left on the J.E.B Stuart Highschool Majorette squad in her senior year, 1964.



Left to Right: Mrs. Ruth S. Robinson, Mrs. Remell T. Lomax, Mrs. Marion T. Ross, Mrs. Margaret M. Brown, Mrs. Clara M. Mitchell, Principal, Miss Marjorie L. Williams.

Lillian Carey Elem. Faculty 1956



Mrs. Camille Brown, then Ms. Camille Washington, on the Bloomberg State University Majorette squad in her sophomore year of college, 1966.



Mrs. Camille Brown, then Ms. Camille Washington, pictured kneeling in the first row on the left, on the Bloomberg State University Majorette squad in her junior year of college, 1967, where she was also a captain.

Bibliography

Bloomberg State College, 1966: *The Orbiter*. Bloomberg, PA: 1966. AncestryLibrary.
https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/imageviewer/collections/1265/images/1265_b921952-00000?usePUB=true&_phsrc=nda39&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pId=1361316643. Accessed on May, 12th, 2021.

Bloomberg State College, 1967: *The Orbiter*. Bloomberg, PA: 1967. AncestryLibrary.
https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/imageviewer/collections/1265/images/1265_b921952-00000?usePUB=true&_phsrc=nda39&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&pId=1361316643. Accessed on May, 12th, 2021.

J.E.B Stuart Highschool, 1964: *Sabre*. Falls Church, VA: 1964. Internet Archives.
<https://archive.org/details/sabre05jebs/page/206/mode/2up?q=Camille>. Accessed on May, 5th, 2021.



People to People NAESP Delegate to China 2001